

South Dakota SSIP Phase III-Year 4 Report

Section A: Summary of Phase III

Theory of Action

The Theory of Action (see Appendix A) for the South Dakota State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) continued to provide the foundation of the SSIP Phase III-Year 4 Implementation efforts. As stated in the Theory of Action, the South Dakota Special Education Programs office (SEP) FFY 19 State-identified Measurable Result (SiMR) indicates that students with specific learning disabilities (SLD) will increase reading proficiency prior to 4th grade from 4.84% in spring 2015 to 44.49% by Spring 2020 as measured by the Statewide assessment. As discussed in Phase I and Phase II, SEP and its stakeholders developed the Theory of Action (see Appendix A) to describe four broad Standards of Action as follows:

- Data Analysis
- Instructional Practices and Strategies
- Collaboration, and
- Family and Community Involvement

All coherent improvement strategies implemented fall within one or more of these four Standards of Action.

Coherent Improvement Strategies

Over the course of this reporting period, SEP and its stakeholders continued to develop and implement SSIP activities as described in the ensuing sections of this report. It should be noted that this report reflects the participation of (15) implementation sites (school sites) representing a broad sample of students. Staff members including general education teachers, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals in each implementation site continued to receive professional development through the *Teaching Reading Sourcebook* recognized by the National Reading Panel. Additional

professional development efforts were centered on coaching, data analysis training, and benchmark assessment tool trainings. The SEP, stakeholder groups, and implementation sites validated these practices to be evidence-based, many of which were being implemented by one or more of the sites, enabling the SSIP to leverage current initiatives and strategies.

Throughout Phase III-Year 4, participating sites implemented these evidence-based strategies and ensured a focus on training new staff members to support full implementation of each strategy. As part of the evaluation plan, the sites provided feedback through the completion of training evaluations, a Problem-Solving Checklist, intervention tracking forms, coaching survey, tracking coaching activities, family engagement surveys, student benchmark data, and student State test data. In addition, follow-up phone interviews were conducted with the participating sites as well as previous sites who are sustaining the SSIP without state support.

Ongoing infrastructure analysis and improvement efforts continued to focus on alignment of the new State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) activities with what the state and school sites were already doing under the SSIP. A state leadership team and other stakeholders held intentional planning meetings to discuss alignment efforts and identify how school sites participating in both initiatives could benefit from the promising and beneficial components of each program. For example, the South Dakota SPDG contains a strong coaching element that the SSIP project was generally missing. SEP and leadership teams began analyzing and discussing potential adjustments that could be made to the SSIP processes that could begin to integrate beneficial aspects of the SPDG program. These adjustments are expanded on in Section F of this report. This work of strategizing and identifying substantive steps to align and integrate the two programs continue into the new reporting year.

Evidence-Based Practice Implementation

All evidence-based practices are tied to the identified four Standards of Action as described in the Theory of Action:

- **Data Analysis.** Under Data Analysis, the skills and knowledge being trained on and observed for implementation coalesce around General and Special Education teachers understanding and applying evaluation data knowledge for purposes of instructional decision making. Staff are trained how to analyze and understand student level data using their own district data, and staff are coached on how instructional adjustments are made based on the various types of data.
- **Instructional Practices and Strategies.** Teachers are trained in reading instruction using strategies in the *Teaching Reading Sourcebook*. This provides the foundational strategies for implementation and subsequent observation and fidelity checks.
- **Collaboration.** This Standard of Action seeks to increase the quality and frequency of general and special education staff collaboration activities. Alignment of instructional efforts across settings is an important component to maximizing evidence-based activities and giving students a seamless learning experience.
- **Family and Community Involvement.** Similar to collaboration between general and special education programs, high quality instruction includes supports that further collaboration between schools, families, and communities. SSIP implementation sites have engaged families directly through the organic IEP processes, and also by working to improve family-friendly practices within the school and classrooms, to include environmental and interpersonal strategies.

Brief Overview of the Year

Sections D and E provide a more in-depth discussion of the evaluation activities and outcomes. Briefly, the following evaluation activities occurred during this reporting period:

- Data on student outcomes (State test data and formative school-based assessments) was collected and analyzed at defined time periods before and after coherent improvement strategies/interventions were implemented.
- Comparable LEAs in the State were identified to serve as a comparison group to the pilot sites.

- Because one of the largest pilot sites implementing the coherent improvement strategies used a phased approach to implementation (i.e., to one group of schools in year 1, a second group in year 2, and a third group in year 3), this allowed the SEP SSIP State Team to use the schools with phased-in implementation as a comparison group.

In summary and as further discussed in Section F, overall outcomes for the SiMR are not what would be expected. From spring 2015 to spring 2019, there has been little change in the reading proficiency rate of Grade 3 students with specific learning disabilities. In spring 2015, the proficiency rate was 4.84%; in spring 2019 it was 5.82%; in between these two data points, scores went as high as 7.25% and as low as 3.90%. The targets (which were set to follow the goal-setting procedures as set forth in South Dakota's ESSA Plan) have not been met for any year. SEP will hold a stakeholder meeting in June 2020 to review all data, including student proficiency, and develop a plan to address the lack of progress.

Section B: Progress in Implementing the SSIP

SSIP Implementation Progress

During the 2018-2019 reporting year, the focus of the South Dakota SSIP continued to be providing support to pilot schools and helping them sustain improvement, intervention, and evaluation activities. Additionally, and as mentioned in the previous report, the SSIP leadership team and lead staff from SEP continued to discuss and strategize a plan to integrate and align activities implemented under the SPDG and the SSIP work. The efforts to align and integrate are a natural evolution of state level supports because the focus and target student populations are essentially the same. The SiMR fits nicely with the intended outcomes and data measurements of the SPDG.

South Dakota has accomplished the goal of sustaining and providing continued support to implementation sites. One of the participating districts containing 15 elementary schools applied for and received sustainability support. Through the grant process,

South Dakota supported these schools with two special education support coaches, a fidelity coach, and continued professional development in literacy and tiered support to all general educators, special educators, and paraprofessionals. Other districts who did not participate in the sustainability grant were contacted regularly with professional development opportunities provided by other related initiatives, including SD SPDG and SD MTSS. Participants in these other districts were also contacted for follow-up phone interviews to determine the impact of the SSIP and sustainability.

Throughout the year, SEP has reached out to leaders in the SD SPDG and SD MTSS initiatives to discuss ways to align and collaborate to support districts. Professional development offered by any of the three initiatives was opened to participating schools in all three programs. Evaluation plans for SD SPDG and SD SSIP were aligned to streamline the evaluation process and allow for better comparisons among schools participating in all three initiatives. Historically, South Dakota has not seen collaboration among projects, so SEP was excited to engage in this level of collaboration with other initiatives.

The following is an Activities Timeline that SEP created to help guide and document key activities. The chart includes the activity, dates, and personnel involved. Those related to stakeholder sharing and feedback are in green.

Activities Timeline		
Date	Members	Purpose/Outcome
03/21/19	SSIP State Team	Team meeting to work on SSIP APR.
04/16/19	SSIP Lead	NCSI Webinar - Family engagement and literacy.
04/30/19	SSIP Lead; District staff	SSIP School Visit - classroom observations

		and meeting with building leadership.
05/01/19	SSIP Lead; District staff	SSIP School Visit - classroom observations and meeting with building leadership.
05/21/19	SSIP State Team	Discussion of the 18-19 school year. Planning for 19-20 school year.
05/23/19	SSIP Lead	NCSI Webinar - Connections between family engagement, literacy, and student outcomes.
06/05-06/19	NCSI Collaborative Meeting	Collaborate with other states; understand where we are situationally compared to others; obtain specific information on initiative alignment strategies, messaging, and data collection.
06/18/19	SSIP Stakeholder Group Meeting	Review end-of-year data; discuss strengths and needs; celebrate successes; provide continued support through SPDG grant for professional development.
09/17/19	SSIP State Team	Discuss plans for the 19-20 school year, supports to schools in the sustainability grant, and alignment/collaboration with the SD SPDG grant.
09/19/19	SSIP Lead	NCSI Webinar - Adolescent literacy.
09/25/19	SSIP Lead	NCSI - SSIP Leads Call.
10/03/19	SSIP Stakeholder Group	Review 2019-2020 evaluation plan with district receiving sustainability grant support.
10/17-18/19	SSIP State Team;	Attended SPDG National Meeting to continue

	SPDG State Team	conversations about SSIP/SPDG collaboration and alignment.
12/10-11/19	SSIP State Team; SD Special Education Leadership	NCSI Collaborative Convening - Exploration of alignment with other South Dakota initiatives (RDA, SD MTSS).
01/07/20	SSIP State Team	Planning for upcoming annual report.
01/09/20	SSIP Lead	South Dakota Special Ed Director Meeting - Shared updates on the SD SSIP, data, and future plans with SD Special Education Directors
01/23/20	South Dakota Initiative Leadership Meeting	Leadership from SPDG, SSIP, MTSS, and RDA met to discuss alignment and collaboration among all four initiatives.
01/23/20	SSIP Lead	South Dakota Advisory Panel for Children with Disabilities - Shared updates on the SD SSIP, data, and future plans with Advisory Members.
01/28/20	SSIP Stakeholder Group	Discussed fall semester results; reviewed strengths and needs; planned for continued support in spring semester.
02/26/20	SPDG State Leadership Meeting	Discussed alignment and collaboration opportunities between SPDG, SSIP, and MTSS initiatives.
03/06/20	SSIP State Team	Met to review draft of SSIP annual report.
03/31/20	SSIP Submission	Submit annual SSIP report

SEP continues to partner with other Department of Education (DOE) divisions to provide annual training in foundational literacy skills. Past and present SSIP schools are notified and invited to attend these trainings. SEP continues to utilize the SDPD tracking system to collect district data in data analysis, foundational literacy, collaboration, and family engagement.

Stakeholder Involvement

South Dakota's SSIP team has provided regular updates to a variety of stakeholder audiences. The SSIP Evaluation plan is shared digitally with participating schools and stakeholders (<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/rxsx1h5q5srtjyn/AABEGhRi-unP-74VFTLKNTaZa?dl=0>). The SSIP Lead shared progress updates during a monthly state special education director webinar, a webinar for new special education directors, and a meeting of the South Dakota Advisory Panel for Children with Disabilities. Regular updates were provided to the SSIP stakeholder group (including participating districts) during quarterly calls and meetings.

During calls and onsite visits, participating pilot districts share successes and setbacks and provide feedback on the support received through participation in the SSIP. That feedback is collected and shared with the SSIP State Team during state team calls and meetings and this feedback is used to refine and revise support to pilot districts.

Section C: Data on Implementation and Outcomes

Monitoring and Measuring Outputs

The SD SSIP Logic Model, developed by the SEP SSIP State Team during Phase II, provides details on how the coherent improvement strategies under each of the four Standards of Action will lead to various short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes. The SD SSIP Evaluation Plan for the 2019-20 document and the SD SSIP Detailed Evaluation Questions for the 2019-20 document (see Appendix B) provide details on the data sources for the key measures used to assess the implementation and outcomes of each coherent improvement strategy.

The general measures that span all or most of the four Standards of Action are:

1. Activity tracking: A secure website (South Dakota Professional Development or SDPD) has been developed to track each training conducted by the pilot districts. The SEP SSIP State Team and appropriate district staff are given log-in credentials to enter and view workshops and workshop evaluation reports.
2. End-of-Training Evaluations: The SDPD website has a training evaluation component. Training participants are given a unique URL for each training and participants complete the corresponding evaluation online. The system then produces evaluation reports in real time.
3. Participant Tracking: The SDPD website has a participant tracking component. This allows SEP to know who participated in each training.
4. Forms that measure whether participants are implementing new skills (e.g., Problem- Solving Checklist and Tiered Intervention Tracking Forms).
5. Fidelity of Implementation Tools: These tools are used by an external observer to measure the implementation of new skills.

These measures allow the SEP SSIP State Team to assess progress toward achieving the intended improvements. The SDPD site allows for the tracking of training and evaluations in real-time. The tracking of tiered interventions in November, February, and May checks on the implementation of instructional practices throughout the year.

To measure the impact of the coherent improvement strategies on student outcomes, the SEP SSIP State Team conducted the following activities in this last year:

- Data on student outcomes (State test data and formative school-based assessments) was to be collected and analyzed at defined time periods before and after the intervention.
- Comparable LEAs in the State were identified to serve as a comparison group to the pilot LEAs.
- In addition, one of the largest pilot LEAs is implementing the coherent improvement strategies to one group of schools in year 1, a second group in year 2, and a third group in year 3. This allowed the SEP SSIP State Team to use the schools with phased-in implementation as a comparison group.

The results of these analyses are summarized in Section E.

The State has regularly reviewed evaluation data as it has become available. Data on outputs, short-term outcomes, and medium-term outcomes are regularly reviewed. The SD SSIP Detailed Evaluation Questions for the 2019-20 document (see Appendix B) show baseline and current data (where available) on each key measure. The SD Data Dashboard Report from 2018-19 and (preliminary) from 2019-20 provide a summary of the evaluation measures collected over the past two years. These dashboard reports were shared with participants and stakeholders. Note that in the SSIP report submitted in April 2019, the data reported was based on data from 2018-19 as of March 2019. The 2018-19 data have been updated to include data from the entire school year; thus, that detail will not necessarily match what was reported previously. Some highlights from the data include:

- For both the Data Analysis and Instructional Strategies trainings, over 80% of participants indicated that their knowledge and skills increased. 100% said they would change something in their job as a result of the

Instructional Strategies training and 67% said that they could change something as a result of the Data Analysis training.

- For the mid-year 2019-20 collection in February 2020, 78 of SLD students at the participating district received an intervention; 50% received a Tier 2 intervention with achieved success, and 66% received a Tier 3 intervention with achieved success. For the final 2018-19 collection in May 2019, 67% of SLD students at the pilot districts received an intervention; 80% received a Tier 2 intervention with achieved success, and 71% received a Tier 3 intervention with achieved success.
- 82% of educators and 87% of family members indicated that family members are engaged in the school.
- 89% of educators and 82% of family members indicated that family members report involvement in literacy activities with their children.
- In February 2020, Follow-Up Interviews were conducted with staff from the implementation sites to determine the sustainability and long-term impact that participation had on schools. Highlights from the interviews:
 - 100% of interviewees stated that the Data Analysis trainings were useful.
 - 63-100% of interviewees stated that the SSIP project impacted their knowledge and skills surrounding Instructional Practice, Literacy and Assessment, Collaboration between General Education and Special Education, and Family Engagement efforts.
 - 100% stated that their participation in the project benefited their school or district at least “Somewhat.” 95% stated that the SSIP positively impacted students with disabilities; 84% stated that the SSIP positively impacted students with specific learning disabilities.
 - 79% stated they have been able to sustain the work they began during the SSIP project.
 - 95% stated that the SSIP continues to impact teachers and/or students.

Demonstrating Progress and Making Modifications

The pilot districts are encouraged to review their data from the evaluation measures and make changes in the ways in which they are implementing their strategies. Twice a year, during stakeholder meetings, State level dashboards are presented and districts are encouraged to ask questions in order to utilize the reports at the district level. Detailed reports on each measure are sent quarterly to each district, and a data dashboard report is generated for each of the pilot districts.

Districts are attentively examining the evaluation data they receive. For example, after reviewing the results from the Classroom Observation Checklist, one district determined that Tier 3 interventions were not being delivered with fidelity. That particular district has since increased the training and ongoing coaching provided to teachers delivering Tier 3 interventions.

Based on the detailed reports given to districts, another past change or adjustment at the district level was an increase in professional development being provided to educators during Phase III. These two examples of adjustments to the SSIP implementation were based on data from the SSIP evaluation activities.

One data-based change that was made during FFY 2016 was the SiMR targets. Partially due to leadership turnover and concerns with current capacity for implementation, one of the pilot districts dropped out of the project in 2016-17. Thus, baseline data was modified so it consisted of the remaining pilot districts' data. In addition, the targets for the SiMR were changed because there are two years of data based on Smarter Balanced (the new State reading test). South Dakota administered the Smarter Balanced assessment in spring 2015 and then again in spring 2016. Based on the new baseline data, challenging targets were set for the SiMR, starting with the 2016-17 school year. The targets were set following the goal-setting procedures as set forth in South Dakota's ESSA Plan.

Stakeholder Involvement

As specified in Section B, several in-person stakeholder meetings were held. At these meetings, detailed evaluation information was provided to the stakeholders, and stakeholders provided feedback on the evaluation measures and results. The SEP SSIP State Team Lead held regular conference calls with key staff from the pilot districts to review updates on implementation of the plan and provide TA on the evaluation plan collection and reporting. In addition, the pilot districts regularly receive reports on their completed evaluations so they can make necessary adjustments to the implementation of their plan. Based on feedback from stakeholders that new and returning staff would benefit from continued training in literacy and instructional practices, SEP continues to provide annual training to districts in those areas.

Section D: Data Quality

Data Limitations

In general, the data collected have been of high quality, and the SEP SSIP State Team has had very few concerns. The most important data for evaluating progress is the State Test Data. This high-quality data is being collected on all students with SLD.

No data quality issues are surrounding the evaluation measures in the 2019-20 school year. There could be a data quantity issue in that only one SSIP district is providing information on all the evaluation measures in the 2019-20 Evaluation Plan. Though data is collected from one district, this district is one of the largest in the state. As mentioned in the prior SSIP APR, four of the five SSIP districts decided to sustain the SSIP work on their own, so they are not providing any evaluation information other than participating in the follow-up phone interviews (which gauges the extent of their sustainability efforts) and the state test. Both of these measures are very important for judging the success of the SSIP, so having the “sustainability” districts participate in these measures was very important.

The one district that is continuing on with the SSIP is participating in those evaluation measures that have been aligned with the SPDG project. Data from this district has been included in previous SSIP reports and are all high-quality measures. Measures from each action strand are being collected, analyzed, and reported on.

Section E: Progress Toward Achieving Intended Improvements

Assessment of Progress

Several evaluation measures address the issue of fidelity of implementation for the areas identified in the Theory of Action. For the Data Analysis action strand, the SEP SSIP State Team collected data on several components surrounding the Data Analysis process that schools are to engage in after the Data Analysis training. These include the Problem-Solving Checklist for Grade-Level Data Analysis and the Problem-Solving Checklist for Individual Students. These data from 2018-19 show:

- 46% of participants completing the Problem-Solving Checklist for Grade-Level Data Analysis indicate that this Tier 1 activity is being implemented with fidelity. This checklist examines the extent to which teams are engaging in the critical components for reviewing Tier 1 data.
- 61% of participants completing the Problem-Solving Checklist for Individual Students indicate the best practices for a follow-up meeting are being conducted; 46% indicate that the best practices for an initial meeting are being conducted.

For the Instructional Practices and Strategies action strand, the Intervention Tracking form and the Classroom Observation Checklist address the fidelity of implementation question.

- Data from 2018-19 show that students with SLD are getting Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions, and that these interventions are successful. In May 2019, after a full year of tiered interventions, teachers reported that 71% of students receiving a Tier 2 intervention and 80% of SLD students receiving a Tier 3 intervention made progress as a result of the intervention.
- Data from 2019-20 show that students with SLD are getting Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions and that these interventions are successful. In February 2020, after a partial year of tiered interventions, teachers reported that 50% of SLD students receiving a Tier 2 intervention and 66% of SLD students receiving a Tier 3 intervention made progress as a result of the intervention.

The analysis of the February 2020 Intervention Tracking data suggests that teachers are implementing the strategies they were taught. However, more direct fidelity of implementation data will be collected again in May 2020 with the Classroom Observation Checklist. This checklist measures the extent to which teachers who have been trained in foundational literacy skills are implementing what they were taught. This checklist was completed in 2018-19 for a sample of teachers from each of the pilot districts by a trained expert observer. This analysis from 2018-19 indicates that 49% of observed teachers were implementing the instructional strategies with fidelity. In response to the checklist results, SEP has continued to provide professional development in foundational literacy and explicit instruction.

Of course, the main purpose of the SSIP is to impact students' reading achievement. The report now turns to an analysis of state test scores and district-level benchmark scores.

Below are two data charts: Display 1 and Display 2. Display 1 shows the progress on the FFY 18 SiMR. These results show that from spring 2015 to spring 2019, there has been little change in the reading proficiency rate of Grade 3 students with specific learning disabilities. In spring 2015, the proficiency rate was 4.84%; in spring 2019 it was 5.82%; in between these two data points, scores went as high as 7.25% and as low as 3.90%. The targets (which were set to follow the goal-setting procedures as set forth in South Dakota's ESSA Plan) have not been met for any year.

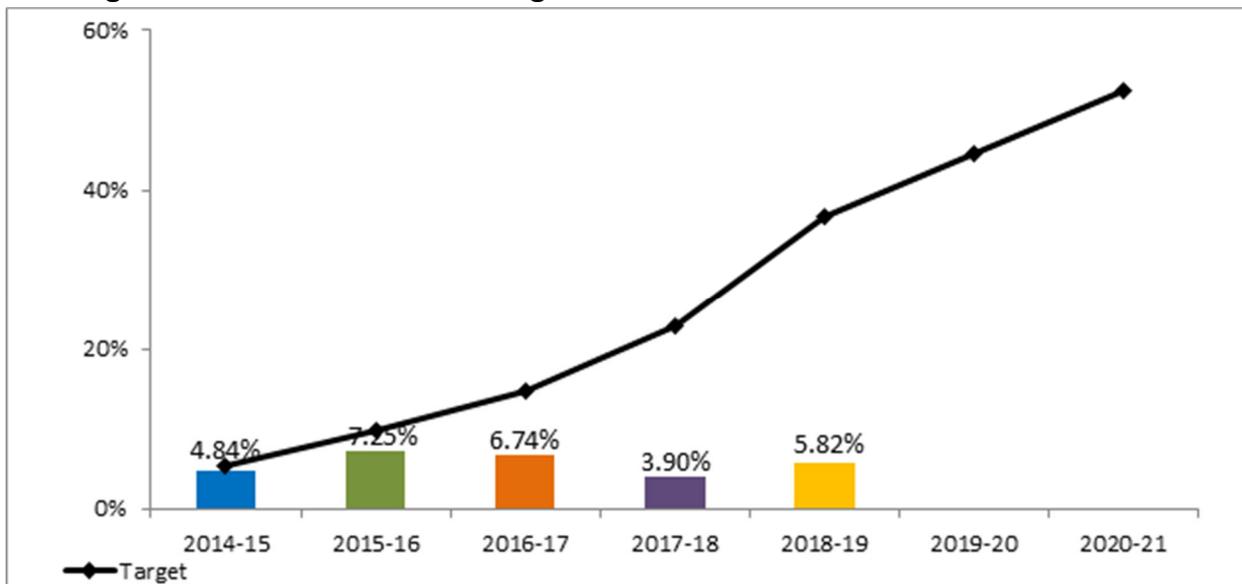
Other data (i.e., reading benchmark data) besides the State reading test data were utilized to examine short-term and medium-term outcomes. Benchmark data from the pilot districts show mixed results (see Display 2).

- For students with SLD in grades K, 1, 4, and 5 the percentage scoring at benchmark from fall to spring for 2018-19 increased.
- For students with SLD in grades 2 and 3, the percentage scoring at benchmark from fall to spring for 2018-19 decreased.

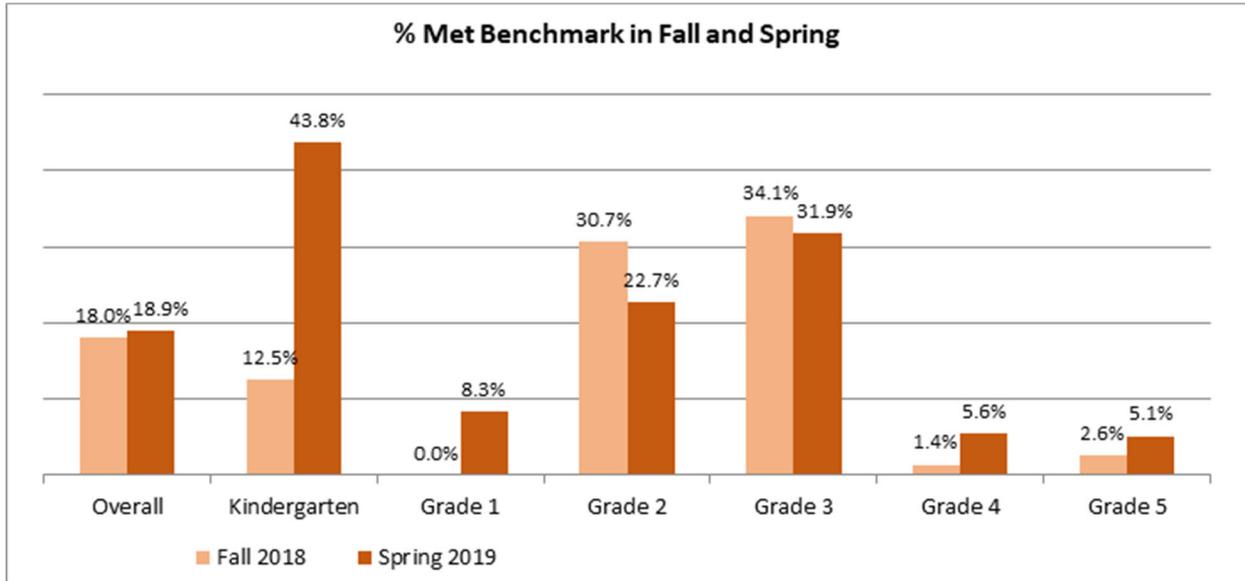
When comparing these benchmark results for students with SLD to all students with disabilities and with all students, a similar pattern was found whereby grade 2 students had a decrease in scores from fall to spring and grade 3 students had a decrease (SWD) or small increase (all students). However, compared to students with SLD who had an increase in the percentage meeting benchmark across all grades of .9 percentage points from fall to spring, students with disabilities had an increase of 4.1 percentage points and all students had an increase of 6.2 percentage points.

The SD SSIP State Team will continue to evaluate these data for all grades to determine if changes in improvement strategies need to take place for students in grades K-3. One suggestion is that while the percent meeting benchmark did not increase from fall to spring, the percent showing growth did increase.

Display 1: Percentage of Grade 3 Students with a Specific Learning Disability Scoring Proficient on State Reading Test – Five Pilot Districts



Display 2: Percentage of Students with a Specific Learning Disability Meeting the Benchmark in Fall and Spring 2018-19



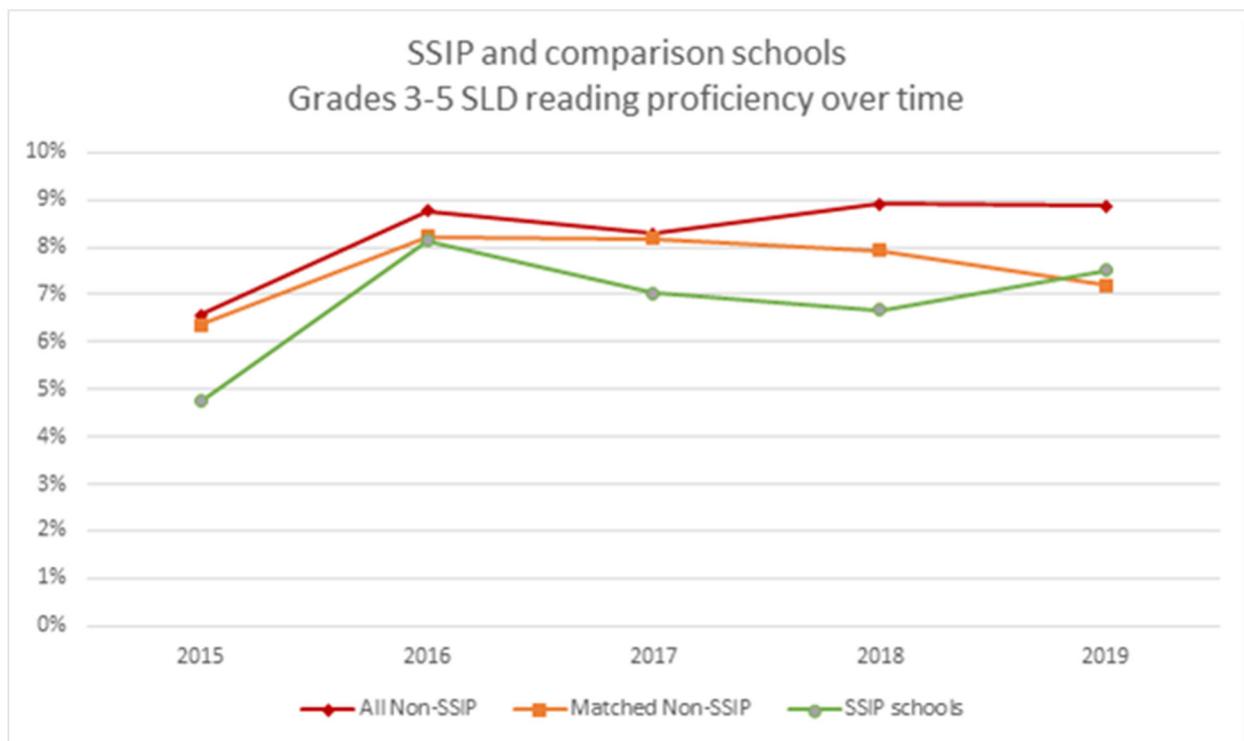
Because the proficiency rates are not increasing as the DOE hoped, the stakeholder group met and discussed possible reasons for the lack of progress in state test scores. These reasons were examined as part of an in-depth statistical analysis.

Comparison School Analysis

SEP compared the state test reading proficiency scores of SSIP schools to a comparable group of schools and to all non-SSIP schools. The results indicate:

- The SSIP program had no impact on state test reading proficiency for grade 3-5 students with specific learning disabilities. Even when matching SSIP schools to otherwise similar schools as a comparison and accounting for covariates like size, race, and gap analysis variables, there is no significant difference in the linear trend of reading proficiency across years between groups.
- No significant difference is evident in reading proficiency between groups for any given year.
- No significant difference is evident within the SSIP group between years; e.g., SSIP schools scored 4.8% in Spring 2015 and 7.5% in Spring 2019 but that difference is not significant (as shown in Display 3 below).

Display 3

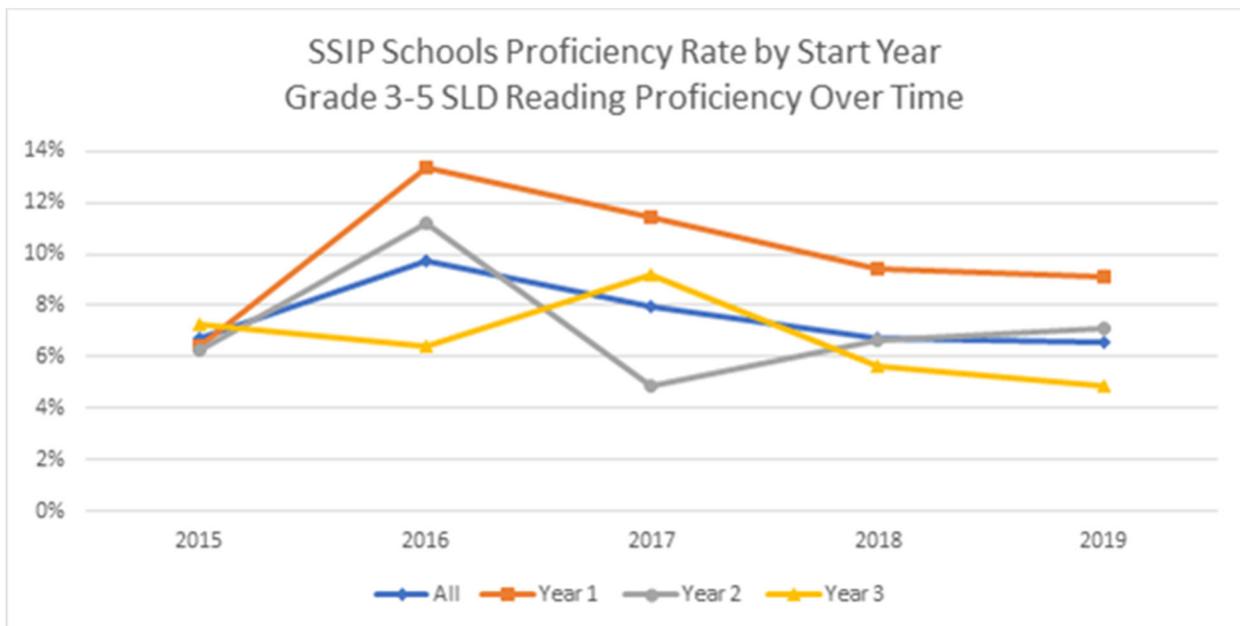


Within District Analysis of Staggered Implementation Schools

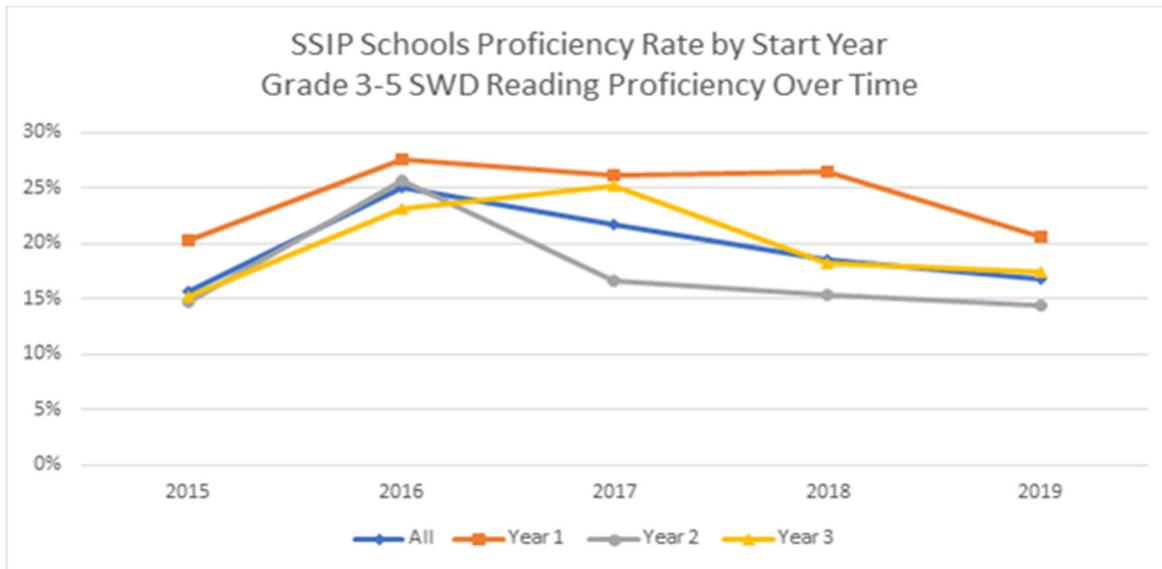
Given that one of the largest pilot LEAs implemented the coherent improvement strategies to one group of schools in year 1, a second group in year 2, and a third group in year 3, SEP examined the data by year of implementation so that each implementation year could serve as the comparison group.

These results don't show a positive impact of SSIP on state test reading proficiency. While the Year 1 schools had a big increase in their state test reading proficiency scores for students with specific learning disabilities from Year 1 (6.4%) to Year 2 (13.3%), Years 3-5 show decreases in the reading proficiency scores (9.1%). Year 2 and Year 3 schools did not see an increase in their scores after the first year of implementation, and those schools ended up at a lower proficiency rate in spring 2019 than when they started the SSIP program (Year 2 schools went from 11.2% proficiency to 7.1% proficiency; Year 3 schools went from 9.2% proficiency to 4.9% proficiency.) If SEP examines all students with disabilities in these three groups of schools, the pattern of scores that emerges is not encouraging. All three cohorts end up at a proficiency rate that is the same or lower than the proficiency rate in the year in which they started. No differences in rates are significant (as shown in Display 4).

Display 4



Display 5



Sustainability

The DOE used the information about the lack of improvement in State Test reading proficiency scores when designing the SPDG. Positive elements (e.g., a focus on family engagement and research-based foundational literacy skills) of the SSIP were retained, and additional elements (e.g., coaching) were added to improve teacher instruction and support which in turn would improve the outcomes for students with disabilities. For the pilot districts that did not choose to continue with the SSIP, SEP is encouraging them to sustain the positive features of the SSIP and inviting them to participate in ongoing, state-sponsored trainings in data analysis, foundational literacy, and research-based instructional strategies.

To get in-depth information about if and how the SSIP project is being sustained, a sample of teachers who have participated in the SSIP project over the last five years were interviewed on the phone. Results indicate that 79% of teachers interviewed have been able to sustain the work they began during the SSIP project. 95% of teachers interviewed stated that the SSIP continues to impact teachers and/or students. This information also showed that for 84% of teachers, the SSIP positively impacted students with SLD and over 95% stated the SSIP impacted students with disabilities. 100% of teachers interviewed stated that their participation in the project benefited their school or

district at least “Somewhat” (89% said “Yes”). 63-100% of interviewees stated the SSIP project impacted their knowledge and skills surrounding Instructional Practice, Literacy and Assessment, Collaboration Between General Education and Special Education, and Family Engagement Efforts at least “Some” (26-95% said at least “Quite a bit”).

Even though the state reading proficiency rate data showed little to no improvement for students with specific learning disabilities, the SSIP has not been completely for naught. Other evaluation data indicated that the SSIP positively impacted teachers’ skills and knowledge, and teachers stated that the SSIP project positively impacted their schools, their students with disabilities, and their students with specific learning disabilities. Reading achievement on a state test is a hard needle to move for students with specific learning disabilities. However, it is a needle SEP wants to move. This is why students with specific learning disabilities continue to be a focus in the SPDG. Further, SEP took what was learned from the SSIP and made important changes in the SPDG, such as district-level on-site coaching. Thus, SEP has reason to be optimistic about the difference the SPDG will make in the outcomes for students with specific learning disabilities and for students with disabilities. The SSIP was a very important springboard for this effort.

Section F: Plans for Next Year

Additional Activities

SEP is focusing future efforts on alignment and collaboration across similar initiatives, including the state's SPDG grant and MTSS implementation efforts. Leadership from all three initiatives have met to discuss similarities across systems and evaluation measures. SEP will hold a stakeholder meeting on June 29th to review the current SiMR and theory of action. SEP will gain feedback on next steps for alignment and collaboration. This stakeholder group will include district and state representation from all three initiatives.

Summer professional development will continue to be provided to districts. This will include a 2-day Explicit Instruction workshop and a 5-day Foundational Literacy training. Both pilot and sustainability districts receive invitations to attend these trainings.

During the 2020-2021 school year, SEP will continue to collect state test data and conduct follow ups with pilot and sustainability districts. SEP will also work to implement the changes identified in the summer 2020 stakeholder meeting.

Planned Evaluations

SEP will continue collecting evaluation data from pilot and sustainability districts. As alignment across initiatives improves, SEP will also compare data across SSIP, MTSS, and SPDG districts. This will allow for program comparison and determinations of which practices produce the strongest gains for students. By identifying promising practices through data analysis, SEP can then leverage efforts in those areas.

Anticipated Barriers

Barriers could include alignment/collaboration efforts. In the past, alignment and collaboration efforts have been challenging. Scheduling times that work for all involved can be difficult, and not all involved share the same vision and focus. Working with skilled facilitators, such as the Center for Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special

Education (TAESE) will move SEP forward in producing successful work in aligning and collaborating across divisions and initiatives.

Another barrier continues to be the lack of progress in grade 3 state test data. SEP has identified a gap between student benchmark results and state test results. Although some students and groups are seeing growth in benchmark areas, that progress is not transferring to state test results. A possible reason for this disconnect is the skills evaluated by each measure. Benchmark assessments most often focus on foundational skills (i.e. decoding words and reading sentences fluently) while the state test focuses more on advanced comprehension skills (i.e. identifying the theme of a piece of text, evaluating author's purpose across multiple pieces of text). This concern will be shared with the stakeholder group this summer and SEP will discuss possible changes to better align the professional development and the assessment measure.

Need for Additional Support

To continue effective implementation, a support that has been quite helpful are coordinated opportunities to connect with other states and share out strategies to overcome common barriers. SEP maintains active participation in national technical assistance centers, including NCSI, IDC, CIFR, CIID, SIG, and NCIL. These centers provide excellent information and opportunities for cross-state networking and growth. Additional resources and tools in the area of literacy and collaboration between general education and special education at the school level would be helpful.